

Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program – (TRIP)

Pursuant to T.C.A. Sections 11-9-201 et seq.

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MUNICIPAL/COUNTY RECREATION SYSTEMS IN TENNESSEE

Recreation is a vital aspect in achieving quality of life standards in a community. According to the most recent State of Tennessee Recreation Survey: (1) 56% of the respondents said they expect their level of recreation to increase in the next 5 years; (2) 76% of the respondents currently spend up to 10 hours on recreation per week; (3) 85% of the respondents said that recreation was important or very important. However, currently over 35% of the state population is not served by an organized parks and recreation delivery system.

Tennessee has 87 full-time departments with a professional director and/or staff. There are also approximately 42 communities staffed with a park director, park maintenance supervisor, or other designated position to oversee some recreation/park services. Some of these are paid staff people and some are appointed volunteers. The main intent of the **Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program (TRIP)** is to provide grant money to those cities and counties who lack the staffing and organization to provide comprehensive recreation services in their communities.

In Tennessee, the primary responsibility of the provision for local recreation services rests with local government, and is a legitimate and essential function of local government services. Local governments can act as a focal point in providing a balanced recreation delivery system utilizing partnerships with other government agencies, schools, or other recreation providers. T.C.A. Sections 11-9-201 to 11-9-203 authorizes a grant program to establish municipal and county recreation systems.

OBJECTIVE OF THE TENNESSEE RECREATION INITIATIVE PROGRAM

<p>The objective of the Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program is to target and provide grant money to those cities and counties currently without a comprehensive parks and recreation delivery system in operation due to lack of staffing and organization.</p>

Records of past technical assistance requests through the Parks and Recreation Technical Advisory Service (PARTAS), and results of the most recent TRIP Questionnaire showed the critical need for the establishment of new and full-time recreation and park delivery systems. It is the overall objective of the TRIP program to increase the availability and opportunity for Tennessee citizens to actively participate in activities and programs that will enhance their quality of life.

All cities and counties in the State without parks and recreation services in their communities received a questionnaire. Recreation Educational Services (RES) obtained a 38.8% response rate: 21 surveys from West Tennessee, 44 surveys from Middle Tennessee, and 32 surveys from East Tennessee, indicating interest in full-time recreation services. An overwhelming majority responded that recreation and parks are important services that should be provided by local governments. Seventy-nine percent indicated an interest in participating in TRIP and 36% could financially assist a start-up recreation and parks program.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORIZATION

The Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) pursuant to TCA 11-9- 201, et seq., is authorized to establish the "Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program" - referred to as TRIP. The program will provide grants to any city or county for the hiring of a professional director, furnishing and establishing a recreation office, and to hire such other staff with professional or other appropriate qualities as are needed. Three (3) grants shall be awarded annually on the basis of need and population on a statewide basis, with one (1) award to be made in each grand division; provided, however, if, after the department notifies local government of the availability of such grants, there are no applications from a grand division then the department may award more than one grant to a grand division.

- The grant is for a three (3) year period.
- During the first two years in the program, the community shall match up to fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) from the State.
- The community is responsible for one hundred percent (100%) of the funding for the new program during the third year. If the community fails to fund the third year, they owe the State the dollar value of the total grants received because of the community's failure to fulfill the contract.
- The community shall have no obligation to continue the program after the third year. However, TDEC/RES will evaluate the community's planning and commitment to fund the program after the contract period during the application scoring process.

The implementation of this act is subject to funding in the General Appropriations Act.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scope and Matching Formula - TRIP will be administered on a 50% State and 50% local government-matching basis. The funds are only for matching **administrative operational expenses** for the proposed full-time recreation and park delivery systems. A full-time paid recreation and park professional must administer the department. An applicant may apply for a maximum of \$25,000 and a minimum of \$20,000. The grant period for matching funding is scheduled for two consecutive years, contingent upon annual appropriation by the Tennessee General Assembly and on the ability of the applicant to satisfactorily complete the first year's project agreement. The community has an obligation for 100% of the funding for the new program in the third year.

Agency Responsible for Administration - The Recreation Educational Services Division (RES) of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) has the responsibility of administering the Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program. The Parks and Recreation Technical Advisory Service (PARTAS), a section of RES, will manage all issues pertaining to the administration of TRIP. PARTAS will also provide any technical assistance necessary to establish a new full-time recreation and park delivery system.

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING APPLICANT/APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY

The guidelines set forth in this section will determine whether an applicant/application is eligible for State grant money under the TRIP. Upon initial contact by the potential applicant, the PARTAS staff will discuss the guidelines outlined in this section. If potential applicants qualify for assistance, they should file a formal application. In some cases, the PARTAS staff may meet with potential applicants prior to the closing date for filing the formal application. TDEC/RES will inform local governments if they fail to qualify and explain deficiencies in achieving eligibility requirements. The PARTAS staff will try to assist non-eligible applicants in meeting their recreation and park needs through other channels.

“Multi-government project applications shall have priority over all other projects submitted by a single governmental entity.” The local governing body must approve through a resolution or ordinance, all applications submitted to the state. The chief elected or appointed official (mayor, city and/or county), must request funding. An application for the TRIP program must meet the following criteria for consideration.

Minimum Qualifications for Applicants*

1. The recreation and park delivery system started with the grant will be the only full-time recreation and park delivery system operated by the applicant.
2. If the applicant is a city, the county in which it is located cannot operate an existing full-time recreation and park delivery system.
3. If the applicant is a city, there is no other city in that county with a full-time recreation and park delivery system.
4. The main applicant is an incorporated city/town or a county in Tennessee.

**If RES does not receive any applications from a grand division that meet the above minimum qualifications, then they will consider other applicants; a county, or a multi-government entity, where no more than one full-time parks and recreation delivery system exists in that county, and the applicant can justify the need for a new delivery system based on public demand and population.*

Additional Application Requirements - TRIP grants are awarded to applicants to hire a professional parks and recreation director, furnish and establish a recreation office, and hire other staff with professional or other appropriate qualities as are needed.

1. The application must provide for the establishment of a full-time, year-round recreation and parks department.
2. The project sponsor must be a local government(s).
3. The application must call for the formation of a well-balanced comprehensive recreation program.
4. The applicant must be in compliance with the Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and all ADA compliance guidelines.
5. The project must represent the applicant's initial attempt to establish a full-time, year-round recreation and parks department.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The following constitutes the general procedures for the grant program.

Distribution of Funds. RES distributes TRIP funds as grants to applicants approved during the announced application period. RES will evaluate each application based upon an approved scoring register. Grant recipient recommendations are submitted to the Commissioner of Environment and Conservation for review and subsequent approval.

Match Requirements. The local match requirements for TRIP grants are set forth below:

1. *Match Ratio.* The local government(s) must match the TRIP funds with an equal amount of funds. Project costs matched item by item.
2. *Eligible Match Funds.* The local government must use **cash only** as the matching source for its share of project costs. *In-kind contributions cannot be charged* toward the project.

Program Amount Allocation. For each funding cycle (fiscal year), TDEC/RES shall allocate the funds as follows:

The total budget for this program in its two years of operation shall be:

- three new recreation departments at \$50,000 each;
- administrative costs of \$8,000 per department will go to RES for administration and management of program;
- The State will expend a total of ninety-nine thousand dollars (\$99,000) in the first year of the program.

Recommended TRIP Communities. The amount of available grant funds shall be established annually. A total point score shall be assigned to each application based on the TRIP Scoring Register. RES staff shall prepare a priority list of applications ranked according to assigned point scores. The application with the highest total score in each grand division will be recommended for funding upon meeting all eligibility requirements. In the event there are insufficient applications to account for all program funds allocated, the remaining funds shall be held for another grant cycle if possible.

Compliance. Applicants must comply with all applicable state and federal guidelines, standards, and regulations, i.e., the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards, Title VI, etc.

Public Accessibility. The applicant is responsible for developing and maintaining public recreation in their community through programs and services that are in accordance with the following:

- Hours of operation are reasonable and convenient to the public; all facilities, programs, and services are managed and maintained in a safe and attractive manner appropriate for public use.
- All facilities and programs are open and accessible to the public on a non-exclusive basis without regard to age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, political affiliation, or physical limitations.

- Fees and charges are reasonable and non-discriminatory to non-residents of the city/county. Higher fees may be charged for non-residents; they cannot exceed twice that charged to residents.

DIRECTOR SELECTION PROCESS

The PARTAS consultants will assist applicants in recruiting, interviewing, and hiring a qualified parks and recreation director through a process designed to assist each program sponsor. A job description should identify the director as the department head overseeing all aspects of the department. The new director should have the following minimum qualifications:

- ***Bachelor's degree in Recreation Administration; Health, Safety, and Leisure Studies; etc.***
- ***One year full-time paid experience in a full-time recreation department is desirable.***
- ***It is strongly recommended that the person is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP), or meet the eligibility requirements for certification.***

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS

Applicants are to submit the application found in Attachment A of this document to RES prior to the closing of the application period. Applications will be reviewed for content, presentation, and adherence to any indicated instructions.

Send inquiries and correspondence to:

Tennessee Recreation Initiative Program
Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation
Recreation Educational Services Division
Parks and Recreation Technical Advisory Service
401 Church Street, 10th Floor L & C Tower
Nashville, TN 37243-0439

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is eligible to apply? The main applicant is an incorporated city/town or county in Tennessee. The recreation and park delivery system must represent the applicant's initial attempt to establish a full-time, year-round recreation and parks department. Specific guidelines discussed earlier in this manual describes in depth the applicant eligibility and minimum qualifications.

What should a community do to prepare for a new department and TRIP grant?

- Create a Parks and Recreation Board that represents the diversity of the community.
- Educate the community on what defines a Parks and Recreation delivery system.
- Identify community parks and recreation needs based on public input meetings, surveys, etc.
- Identify the need for a full-time parks and recreation professional.
- Identify sources for match funding and on-going operational budget.

What does hiring a “recreation professional” mean? It is the intention of this grant to establish a diverse parks and recreation department in both the scope and balance of its programs. A “recreation professional” is one who has the education and experience in the field of recreation, in administration, programming, facilities, and maintenance, to create a well-rounded department for all the citizens of a community. It is **not** the intention to simply hire an athletic director, maintenance supervisor, or recreation programmer. The new director is the administrator of a parks and recreation department and will oversee all operations of the parks and recreation department, including administration, maintenance, programming, staffing, and planning.

When will grant winners be announced? All applicants will be notified by mail of project approval or disapproval no later than March 30.

How are applications scored? Applicants must submit the application found in Attachment A of this document to RES prior to the closing date of the application period. Applications will be reviewed for content, presentation, and adherence to indicated instructions, and on-site interviews conducted with top applicants in each grand division. One of the most important aspects of the scoring process is the planning and expressed commitment by the community to provide a diverse parks and recreation department. The applicant must demonstrate this commitment for the first three years, and will receive additional points for specifying how the community will continue the program funding beyond the grant contract.

How can a community fully fund a department the third year and beyond? TRIP applicants must demonstrate the source of program funding in their applications. Applicants may want to establish a written resolution from the official governing body to include the match and continued funding in the operational budget each year. Also, revenue created through programs/events, etc. will help establish recurring funds for the department.

What services and assistance does Recreation Educational Services provide to the TRIP communities? RES will provide assistance in: hiring a director; conducting a

director workshop and orientation; establishing and training of a diverse parks and recreation board; strategic planning workshop; and a departmental assessment in the third year. The Parks and Recreation Technical Advisory Service will also provide continued technical and administrative assistance throughout the grant period.

What does the grant pay for? The TRIP grant will only reimburse for costs associated with establishing an administrative office, salary for new director, and wages for other staffas needed. Programming and maintenance needs such as lawn mowers, basketballs, vehicles, and other equipment are **not** fundable through this grant program. Allowable and non-allowable costs are detailed in Attachment A.

TENNESSEE RECREATION INITIATIVE PROGRAM FUNDING CYCLE

December	TDEC releases formal application manuals to Development Districts, local governments and other potential applicants.
February	Formal TRIP applications must be submitted to TDEC/RES.
February	RES staff applies TRIP criteria to each application to establish funding priorities.
March	On-site review of top applicants in each grand division.
March 30	All applicants are notified of project approval or disapproval.